

/391 cont./

572 busy making implements, such as the large, bone harpoon points
577 which take a long time. Women and girls devote themselves to
their trinkets or weave baskets. Primarily everyone passes the
time in uninhibited, protracted inactivity, unless a major enter-
prise is under way, which requires a definite program for the day.

• 364 An aggregation of many people for weeks at a time is un-
avoidably accompanied by considerable uncleanness around
them. In general the Yamana do not have any particular feeling
for cleanliness, and in this respect they are more backward than
the Selk'nam (Vol. 1, 223). The consequences are not very
noticeable when a single family stops somewhere for a day and
then travels on, but they are different in an encampment of many
people. Walking back and forth makes the earth muddy and
boggy. Refuse from meals decays and contaminates the surround-
ings. The air inside the huts becomes increasingly musty and op-
pressive. True, the cleansing and purifying rain often intercedes,
but it does not improve matters much. Giving way before the
heaped-up refuse, individual families temporarily depart and re-
linquish the dwelling and its environs to the purifying influence of
natural forces.

We can now understand the brief descriptions by a few
European travelers depicting an encampment of many Indians near
a stranded whale, the total picture of which evoked unpleasant,
even disgusting impressions (49). The way they eat and their

49. In earlier travel accounts there are, un-
fortunately, no detailed reports about the
encampments of many families. This is be-
cause there were few occasions for them, and
the same is true at the present time.

unkempt appearance are in themselves repulsive. /392/ Over all
this hang the thick, heavy fumes of blubber. A person not accus-
tomed to it from childhood is bound to become nauseated (50) if

50. One should recall the work centers of
whale fishermen in several places along the
Chilean and Argentine coast, which con-
taminates the air far and wide with unpleas-
ant odors.

/302 cont./

364 he does not quickly get away. The vicinity of a stranded whale is like a large, boggy tangle of blubber, and all around the dwellings pieces of meat and fat are decomposing; an abundant superfluity leads to carelessness in utilization. In order to be able to endure such conditions for any length of time, one has to be a Yamana. These conditions seldom occur, however, and when they do, they are welcomed by our Indians because of their obvious important advantages and the considerable relief they bring. Meanwhile the Indians gladly do without any kind of comfort and cleanliness.

3. The Fire

372 It is utterly superfluous to demonstrate in detail the vital importance of fire in the household, in economic activity, and in the very existence of the southernmost Fuegians. Without fire they could not exist in their damp, cold homeland, and what I observed among the neighboring Selk'nam (Vol. I, 204) holds true for them also, namely, that fire is more indispensable than any kind of protective dwelling. Hyades (c) :345 writes about this necessity as follows: "Because of the rigors of the climate and the absence of clothing, the Fuegians have a passion for fire" /translated from French/. Hence it is nowhere absent. Fitz-Roy (a):187 has observed: "Fire is always kept alive by these savages wherever they go, either in their canoes, in their wigwams, or even in their hand, by a piece of burning wood; but they are at no loss to rekindle it, should any accident happen" /cited in English/.

They guard the fire, pusaki, with special zeal, in the hut and in the canoe, to make sure that it never goes out. Even so, a family loses it when the craft collapses or a heavy downpour with a sudden wind destroys the dwelling (31). Their method of

31. Hyades (f) :359 is entirely correct in his judgment. "The fire is never extinguished, except by accident" /translated from French/.

lighting the fire resembles that of the Selk'nam (Vol. I, 207), namely, by striking the flint, Upukli, against iron pyrites or, more recently, against a big nail. Weddell (a) :105 has already observed: